

[Pioneer Day Stories]

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Title Pioneer day stores

Place of origin Portland, Oregon Date 2/27/39

Project worker Sara B. Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks

Form A

Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date February 27, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Pioneer Day Stories

Name and address of informant Miss Mary Agnes Kelly 2945 S. E. Franklin St., Portland, Oregon

Date and time of interview February 23, 1939 2:00 to 5:45 P.M.

Place of interview Above address, home of informant.

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Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

Miss Jean Slawson, Lower Drive, Lake Grove, Oswego, Oregon

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you —

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Large, somewhat handsome living room, revealing culture, good taste and moderate wealth on the part of the occupant. The house is a big, two-story structure, its architecture typical of the early 1900's. Resting high above the street level, its grounds are supported by concrete retaining walls, and the house is reached by a flight of concrete steps. The grounds, though not extensive, are attractive and overlooking the community. The property is a small part of the original 650-acre donation land claim of the owner's grandfather, Clinton Kelly, who came to Oregon in 1848.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

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Name and address of informant Miss Mary Agnes Kelly 2945 S. E. Franklin St., Portland, Oregon

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry
 2. Place and date of birth
 3. Family
 4. Places lived in, with dates
 5. Education, with dates
 6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
 7. Special skills and interests
 8. Community and religious activities
 9. Description of informant
 10. Other points gained in interview
1. Father, Penumbra Kelly, son of Clinton Kelly, who crossed the plains to Oregon in 1848. Mother, Mary E. Marquam Kelly, a daughter of pioneers. Ancestral stock, English, Irish, Scotch and Dutch.
 2. Portland, Oregon, February 19, 1877.
 3. Spinster, living with brother in old home.

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4. Home has always been in Portland, Oregon.
5. Portland Public Schools; Portland Academy and State University Extension work.
6. Juvenile court work. Some achievement as writer.
7. Housekeeper and writing, social work.
8. Member of Daughters of American Revolution, and of Daughters of War of 1812.
Member of Presbyterian church.
9. Tall and slender with blue eyes and brown hair, slightly mixed with gray. Of gracious personality, well-bred and well-dressed. Genteel in every respect, verging on the "old school."
10. The informant writes professionally on pioneer subjects, and, for that reason might be less communicative than she otherwise would be.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

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Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Pioneer Day Stories

Library of Congress

Name and address of informant Miss Mary Agnes Kelly 2945 S. E. Franklin St., Portland, Oregon

Text:

My father's people came to Oregon across the plains in 1848. Father's father was Clinton Kelly, the one who filed on all this country round-about as a donation land claim. See, up there on the hill, is the house grandfather built after the burning of his big log house. The house is used now as a sanitarium. There are five cherry trees growing there that grandfather bought from that famous nursery brought across the plains by the Lewellings. Joseph Watt, who afterward started the first woollen mill in Oregon, at Salem, was captain of my people's train. He had come across earlier, in 1843, and so was well qualified for his responsibilities as captain.

Are you interested in Indian stories? If so, here is one that may be interesting because, if you have imagination, you can see something of the picture on the hill over yonder. It was the Indian trouble of 1855 and 1856, when the word went out over the country that the Indians were going to wipe out the whites—the Cayuse and Yakima Indians. I think they were. Of course everybody was panic-stricken, and all the outlying settlers began to pour in, by whatever means they could, to the more closely settled community, which seemed to be in this vicinity.

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Grandfather had built a huge loghouse. I've been told it was 80 by 100 feet. The house was built on the order of some of the old southern plantation homes, in two different sections, roofed over between. As the house and outbuildings were on an eminence, it formed a fairly strong place for protection. So it was here the frightened settlers began to congregate. They came from every direction, especially from the Columbia River and Powell Valley, and they came in every sort of conveyance. The hill up there was practically covered with horses, oxen and wagons, and they stayed for days. The men were busy

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fortifying and getting their arms and ammunition ready, and the women, of course, were more than busy cooking and caring for the many children. One woman — a Mrs. Duvall — from the vicinity of what is now Gresham, had given birth to a baby the very day she had to be moved. How to carry her and the tiny baby safely over the more than ten miles of rough road was a problem that had to be solved quickly. But a man by the name of Jacob Jackson Moore, who owned the land where the Gresham cemetery now is, was quick-witted. Boring holes in the sides of a wagon-bed, he then stretched ropes across, and on the mattress formed by the ropes he placed a feather bed. On this improvised ambulance, mother and babe rode to safety.

A week or so later troops were ordered out against the Indians, and with them went Plympton Kelly, grandfather's oldest son.

Grandfather, Clinton Kelly, did considerable preaching for some time after coming to Oregon, not so much professionally as from a sense of duty. The tradition is that he preached the second sermon in Portland — and that in a cooperage. Elsewhere he preached at Mount Tabor, Lents, Foster's Milwaukie and Oregon City. Dr. Samuel Nelson, a physician, had built a small house on the western slope of Mount Tabor, only it wasn't then named, but it must have been an attractive spot, for during the summer grandfather and his family would go with 3 their ox team and wagon, and Sunday would be put in with, first, Sunday school, then a sermon, and then a class meeting, all in succession. It must have been pretty hard on the youngsters, but all the people in the community came. It was on one of these occasions that somebody suggested naming the mountain. Grandfather's first thought was Mount Zion, but one of his sons, who had been reading history, spoke up and said, "Father, this reminds me of what I have been reading about Mount Tabor. Let's call it that." So Mount Tabor it has been called ever since, though nobody then dreamed they were on an extinct volcano — that they were so close, as you might say, to hell fire and brimstone, even if centuries ago.

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Thomas Kelly, the youngest brother of Clinton, took up a homestead on land where the Grant High School now stands. It was a very remote and lonesome place then. Great-uncle Thomas was a bachelor. He built himself a little log house, and did the various other improvements required by law; but he probably didn't work as hard as he would could, had he been driven by the necessity of supporting a wife and several children. He liked to hunt and he had time for it. He had been hunting one day, and, late in the evening, was carrying home the deer he had shot — carrying it slung over his shoulder, with the head hanging down his back. Dusk had fallen when he realized that he was being followed by something or someone. It didn't take him very long to know that it was a mountain lion or cougar. Knowing the beast's proclivities, that if he hastened his steps attack would be precipitated, he forced himself to hold back when every impulse was to run. Finally, after what seemed to him an eternity, he reached his cabin door. He had no more then dropped the heavy bar inside, when, bang! came the full weight of the cougar on the door. Luckily the door was strong and well-fastened, for again and again the animal lunged, snarling at the barrier. Then it sprang on the roof, and all night long, maddened by the smell of the deer's blood, it yelled and howled and scratched at the frail shakes, only a few feet above his head. With daylight the big cat slunk away, and never was daylight more welcome to great-uncle Thomas, so I've been told.

And here's another cougar story of the early days. Grandfather Marquam, for whom Marquam Bill is named, came to Oregon from California in 1851. He wanted some land cleared, so he hired a man by the name of Latham to do the work. Latham had a wife and three or four little children. The clearing was on the crest of Marquam Hill, where a little house or cabin was built, in which the family might live. Latham was absent from home one night. Early in the evening one of the children was taken sick with some childish ailment, probably colic, for it cried and cried. With darkness, shut in as the cabin was by towering trees, the child's complaining cries grow louder, or so it seemed to the frightened

and lonely mother. Presently, to her horror, there came an answering cry from just outside in the little clearing. By this time all the children were frightened and whimpering, and the sick child screamed both with fear and pain. For every scream it gave the cougar or panther answered. Then it, too, leaped on the frail roof, scratching and tearing to get through. Mrs. Latham had no gun, and wouldn't have known how to fire it if she had. But she did have a washboiler, and she had, it appears, plenty of water and plenty of wood. So all night long she kept the water boiling, her only weapon if the snarling, hungry beast broke through in the midst of her little brood. This time, also, daylight served as a rescuer, but never again did Mrs. Latham spend the night up there on Marquam Hill alone. She said afterward she thought her hair would be white when morning came.

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There is a story, the details of which I wish I could remember better. It is about what we always called the “great-grandfather of all the wolves” story, that was / too smart to take any of the trap baits put out by grandfather Kelly. Time after time calves and sheep and pigs were taken, and time after time grandfather set his traps and his baits — all to no purpose. This “great-grandfather of all the wolves” was just too clever for him. Grandfather grew more and more disgusted at his failure. Then, if I remember the story correctly, he built a little pen, in which he placed a live sheep, yet so protected that the wolf couldn't reach it. Just outside the pen he put some poisoned bait that he had been careful enough to literally “handle with gloves”. The next day grandmother, and father and all the rest of the young Kellys were taken out by grandfather to see the “great-grandfather of all the wolves” stretched out stark and stiff, and dead as a stone.

Grandfather Marquam had a rather keen sense of humor and loved his little jokes. He got a big laugh from the story of the sanctimonious minister — we won't mention the name — who, on returning home from church one Sunday, when the weather was bitter cold, and all the ponds round about were covered with ice, met a little boy with his skates slung

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over his shoulder. This, thought the sanctimonious minister, is a good time to deliver a moral lecture. He spoke to the little boy, who responded in gay, good humor. Then he said, "Sonny, do you know where little boys go, who carry their skates on Sunday?" "Yes, sir," the little boy answered, with a bright smile, "some of 'em goes to Couch's Lake, and some of 'em goes to Carruthers Pond."

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In grandfather's day, the family never went to bed, nor left the house for the day, without first having family prayers, for which the entire family, including such hired man as there might be, congregated in the living room. It was all very patriarchal, and any hired man who refused to comply with this household custom did not long remain in grandfather's employ. First he would read a chapter from the Bible, followed by singing in which all took part, and then there would be a prayer by grandfather.

Another custom in our family, which my brother and I maintain today, is to say on parting for the night, "Goodnight, and bless you."

A farewell salutation of grandmother's was "I wish you well."

Yes, I remember well the Chinese gangs my people employed in clearing land, as well as in cultivating it for garden purposes. They were always very fond of children and would bring us presents. As a rule they were both industrious and honest. But I remember once when father found under the big flat bamboo hats, which they had left on the ground near their work, a number of potatoes, several to each hat. They were planning to take them to their camp, no doubt. So father simply had their boss pick the potatoes all up, and then he gave them to the gang, reminding them at the same time it was unnecessary for them to steal.

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Form D

Extra Comment

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Comment:

Miss Kelly is a very charming and gracious person, much in sympathy with the work in hand, and who is keenly interested in everything pertaining to Oregon and its history. It is possible, therefore, that being an occasional writer of Oregon stories, she felt somewhat justified in not relating anything of interest that she herself might use.